

REPORT SYSTEM AND METHOD USING PROMPT OBJECT ABSTRACTION**ABSTRACT**

An reporting system that incorporates prompt objects in a report definition to enable a user to specify answers to questions to customize a report at execution time. A prompt object contains a single question to be answered, validation values for the answer, and attributes indicating how the prompt object is to be processed. A collection of answers is built up in a resolution object. A report is thus defined by selecting prompt objects in place of templates, filters, or any of the aspects of a template or filter. As a separate object, a single prompt may be issued once and the answer supplied to each reference to the prompt object in a report. A resolution object may be created and saved before the execution of a report. The saved resolution object can then be used to answer prompts at the time of the report execution. The resolution object may be created by third parties and transmitted as an XML resolution object, whereupon receipt by the reporting system, the XML resolution object is translated into a reporting system format.